companies in India are using state of the art technology, comparable to that being used by leading telecom service providers across the world. The technology is not compromised while adding more subscribers. However, in order to meet the growing demand due to the rapid growth of the mobile services and for improving the mobile connectivity, the telecom service providers are to progressively augment their mobile network infrastructure and optimize the same.

(b) Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has directed all telecom service providers that no tariff plan shall be offered, presented, marketed or advertised in a manner that is likely to mislead the subscribers.

(c) The charging of call is effected immediately on answering by the called party when call is established. All the calls are charged for the usages based on the duration of the call and pulse rate in the subscribed plan. In the case of dropped calls the customers is charged for usages based on duration of the call and pulse rate in the subscribed plan.

In order to address customer concerns relating to metering and billing accuracy, TRAI had notified the Quality of Service (Code of Practice for Metering and Billing Accuracy) Regulation 2006 on 21.03.2006. As per the regulation the service providers have to get their metering and billing systems audited and certified from any one of the auditors notified by TRAI and file the Audit report by 30th June of every year. They are also required to file with TRAI the action taken report on the audit report by 30th September of every year.

(d) TRAI has prescribed formats for Publication/advertisement of tariffs and also mandated display of tariff plan and their financial implication on the website of service provider in the prescribed format.

Relevance of postal department in IT era

†4603. SHRI RUDRA NARAYAN PANY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Department of Posts is going to be irrelevant in the present Information and Technology era in country,

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) the total number of post offices and employees in postal department in the country alongwith the number of extra-department employees; and

(c) the details of the plan being worked on by Government to make postal department competitive and effective detailing the new measures that Government have been taking?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) No, Sir. The Department of Posts is providing various mail, financial and retail services through its network of more than 1,55,000 post offices in the length and breadth of the country. Even in the era of information technology, the mail market is expanding specially in business to business and business to consumer segments. The Department of Posts has also taken advantage of information technology for introducing e-enabled services and improving quality of services.

(b) Total number of Post Offices in the country, as on 31.03.2006 is 155333. The total number of employees as on 31.03.2006 is 5,20,191 including, 286,004 extra-departmental employees now Gramin Dak Sewaks.

(c) The Department's proposals for the 11th Five Year Plan (2007-12) are under consideration of the Planning Commission and are yet to be finalized. The proposals will enable the department to capitalize on its strengths, utilize the market opportunities and face challenges such as competition with private operators. Since this can be done only by improving services and adapting them to the needs of a rapidly evolving and increasing technology-driven world, the main focus of the plan is on computerization of financial and non-financial activities; and further development of information technology-based services that can garner substantial revenues.

Gross telephone subscribers

4604. SHRIMATI SUPRIYA SULE: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether gross telephone subscribers in the country reached 196.71 million in January, 2007 as compared to 189.93 million in December, 2006;